

Connect

supporting student participation

ABN: 98 174 663 341

Number 128:

April 2001



JSCs and Peer Mediation

Training primary school students to solve problems ...

*Also in
this
issue:*

- Local Government and Student Participation
 - Student Information Officers
 - JSC and SRC Networks and Training
- ACT Student Networks and SRC
- Student Action Teams: *8 schools' approaches described*
- Resources: *conferences, publications, ideas ...*

& Incorporating the PASTA Newsletter #22

Print Post Approved: PP 340646/0008

ISSN 0158-4995

\$4.00

Connect, 12 Brooke Street, Northcote 3070 Victoria Australia

Connect

Number 128; April 2001

3 Student Information Officers

Richard Hill and Debbie Seddon

4 ACT Student Network and SRC

5 JSC and SRC Conferences *Helga Moss*

6 JSCs and Peer Mediation

8 NEWS AND REVIEWS:

National Youth Conference; Bridging the Gap;
ACSA Conference: 'Education Futures and New
Citizenships'; Active Citizenship Resources

11 PASTA Newsletter #22

11 Pass the PASTA *Jeanne Bow*

**13 ISRC Recommendations and
Future Directions** *Ralph Murray*

14 PASTA Noticeboard

15 Student Action Teams:

- Altona Secondary College
- Karingal Park Secondary College
- Kyneton Secondary College
- Melton Secondary College
- Ovens Secondary College
- Princes Hill Secondary College
- Wanganui Park Secondary College
- Weeroona College

23 CLEARINGHOUSE: Local and Overseas
Publications; Documents, Friends of Connect

24 ORDER FORMS:
Subscriptions, Materials

Connect:

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Publication of Connect is supported by the
Youth Research Centre, Faculty of Education,
The University of Melbourne

Cover:

Students at the Gresswell JSC Cluster Peer Mediation
Workshop; photos on pages 1, 6 and 7

by Wayne Bolton, Kingsbury Primary School.

Photos of ACT students (page 4) and of Student Action
Team reporting day (pages 13-22) by Roger Holdsworth.

This Issue:

This issue highlights three possible models for the interaction of schools and local government in support of student participation. In the first article, Richard Hill and Debbie Seddon write about **Student Information Officers** in Knox - a local government 'employing' students to be the link between schools and local initiatives. Helga Moss reports on two **local conferences of JSCs and SRCs**, where local government is playing an important role in providing the resources and networking for students to get together and obtain training; and finally in the **Student Action Teams** project reported on extensively in this issue, where the role of local government weaves throughout the schools' accounts, in commissioning local research, in collaborating on projects of mutual interest and in funding, as the City of Hume has done, Student Action teams in local schools.

Each of these illustrates processes where real and important needs are identified by students and others, and where students are engaged in meaningful and valuable action to bring about change.

Further, the article on **Junior School Councils and Peer Mediation** also hints at possible developments in action at a local level. This group of schools has a history of connecting together in-school activities (of JSCs) with wider issues of decision-making, representation, democracy and active citizenship within communities, and the plans for 2001 build on this.

In all these areas, productive partnerships with local government provide schools and students with resources (personnel, training, buses, a real challenge), and provide local government with a team of committed and enthusiastic workers who are in touch with a wide community of young people, who have a vision of the ways things could be, and (through clever alliances within the curriculum) who have the time and rewards (credit) to achieve their goals.

There are also substantial moves at the moment to extend and support the role of students within schools and with education systems - to go beyond the mere notion of 'voice' (which can be listened to, but not acted upon; which can limit the action of young people), and enable the active participation of students in decision-making and in meaningful and purposeful action within curriculum and co-curriculum areas.

Roger Holdsworth

NEXT ISSUE: #129 - June 2001

Deadline for material: end of May

STUDENT INFORMATION OFFICERS

*One possible
model to link schools and
Local Government through a
process of active student
participation*

Knox Youth Services (a local government youth service in Melbourne's eastern suburbs) has been operating and improving a **Student Information Officer (SIO)** program over the last ten years. The program engages a young person from each Secondary school within the City of Knox, to become an SIO. The SIO's role is essentially to be a youth directed liaison point between students, Knox Youth Services and a range of other useful and appropriate information and services.

A year 11 student is recruited from each of the ten secondary schools in Knox. We select and invite young people who we believe have the skills to do the job. Young people are generally selected from those that participated in our Young Leaders' Program the previous year, where they covered topics such as communication skills, public speaking, group dynamics and so on.

We provide a clear 'Position Description' which sets out the purpose of the program, required workload, tasks, our expectations and the benefits of participating in the program. Tasks include: attending monthly meetings, disseminating information about Knox Youth Services and other services and activities that are relevant and of interest to young people (the SIOs decide which information is appropriate), speaking at school assemblies, public functions and SRC meetings, and carrying out a

survey. The way they do this and the pursuit of particular issues is determined by them at their monthly meetings.

The yearly survey that the SIOs carry out, entails gathering and recording the opinions of young people in relation to their knowledge and understanding of local services. The survey also provides an opportunity for the SIOs to ask questions that are of interest to the group. Recent surveys have covered transport, leisure and recreational pursuits of young people in the municipality.

SIOs also have the opportunity to be a point of consultation for other Knox City Council Departments and local Youth Services and Agencies. During 2000, the SIOs were actively involved in the development of the Knox Youth Plan. A number of group members participated in, and assisted with, the running of a youth consultation forum held at Timezone.

We recognise SIOs by providing set monthly expenses, by making the process fun, providing social interaction with other young people from different schools and feeding the young people. Most schools support and recognise their SIO and provide notice board space to display information and the like. SIOs are encouraged to become part of their SRC and in some cases the school **requires** a young person to be part of the SRC if they are to participate in the program.

Each year we evaluate, further develop and refine the program. Developments by or with the young people have included:

- Providing a focus group to various organisations like the local shopping centre seeking youth responses;
- Exploring and delivering information to their peers on issues of particular interest like sexuality and recreation;
- Laminating (paid) and distributing a Youth Infocard to every secondary student every two years and to year 7s every year;
- An annual survey of secondary students which assesses knowledge of youth services (and their delivery of it) and asks various questions raised by Council and the SIOs.

In addition, evaluation of the program has suggested that the young people particularly enjoy: the consultation aspect of the program; group discussions

around areas of interest/concern to young people; participating in activities such as Youth Forums; being trained by Specialist Youth Service Providers so that they can carry out a peer education role within their schools; carrying out the survey; and distributing appropriate information and the Infocard.

While the program is mostly a positive experience for both young people and the facilitators, the day-to-day experience has been a bit more messy and variable. Some years the group clicks and are onto the task by their second meeting. Others stagger, bicker and struggle to make it and stay awake at that difficult after school time.

Evaluation suggests we should consider:

- recruiting SIOs immediately after the Young Leaders Program in Year 10, to capture their enthusiasm after the completion of the program and to alleviate difficulties associated with student workloads during Year 11;
- running the program at different times of the day (currently run after school);
- placing more emphasis on the consultation component of the program eg heavily marketing this function to Local Youth Service Providers and the Council;
- incorporating more professional development into the program;
- having two SIOs from each school to provide support to each other and opening up the program to young people who are not currently attending school.

I guess others can think of other ways to adapt and improve this program. Some other Councils do similar things. If you want to know more, you are welcome to ring Richard (03 9298 8312) or Debbie (03 9298 4447).

Richard Hill and Debbie Seddon
Knox Youth Services

ACT Student Network and SRC Training and Planning Day

An all-day meeting of students from High Schools and Colleges across the ACT was held on Friday 30 March at the O'Connell Education Centre in Griffith. Students from SRCs and School Boards attended. The day was a training and planning session for the ACT Student Network, which provides advice to the Department of Education on a range of issues and proposals, and supports students on a Departmental Committees, School Boards and SRCs.

The student training day, under the title: 'Making Your Voice Heard', enabled participants to share information about what was happening in their schools, to discuss opportunities for participation in education and youth areas, to receive information and training about topics like 'The School Board - how to survive', 'Managing and improving your SRC', 'Improving your leadership back at school/college' and 'Participating in curriculum', as well as developing an outline for the ways in which the Network could work.

Students identified three main levels of work for the Network:

- a) **system:** hearing about Department initiatives, responding to these, appointing students to various committees and supporting these students, raising issues about education issues with the Department;
- b) **school/SRC:** discussing SRC issues, helping each other, planning joint action, getting advice about improving the operation of SRCs;
- c) **personal:** developing individual skills to enable representatives to operate better, learning about what was happening, getting advice on how to work better.



The group also decided to explore possibilities for setting up an ACT SRC. This would be a student-run body that works alongside the Student Network to represent the interests and voices of individual schools' SRCs across the ACT, to assist SRCs in their operation, and to enable students to meet formally and informally.

Steve Dawson undertook to start the process of forming such an ACT SRC. Steve can be contacted on <sdawsons7@hotmail.com>.

During Youth Week in Victoria, two local Councils joined with a community agency to organise two one-day networking and training workshops for local student organisations. Helga Moss provides the details:

The JSC Conference 3rd April, 2001

Supported by the Hume City Council, Moreland City Council and Anglicare Youth Services in conjunction with Youth Week 2001. Folders and pens kindly supplied by the Commonwealth Bank.

Youth Week provided a perfect opportunity to invite local primary schools to participate in a training and information conference aimed at Junior School Councils.

Hume and Moreland Primary Schools gathered together in the anticipation of learning more about Junior School Councils, to explore what other schools are doing, and to have the opportunity to meet with other students to exchange information and ideas. Junior School Council students and their coordinators had the opportunity to network with other schools, ask questions and attend workshops. The conference focused on forming a JSC, how to run a meeting and how to be good representatives. Speakers entertained the students and encouraged the students to participate actively in their schools, openly discussing ways to implement and advertise the ideas and achievements of a JSC.

The conference was successful in encouraging the students to be more confident as JSC representatives, instilling leadership skills, negotiation skills, sharing and caring skills and ultimately making the JSC a fun and rewarding experience.

It was wonderful to see how keen the students were to participate in all aspects of the conference. To see such devoted young people was an inspiration in itself, and if tomorrow's generation is a reflection of these students, then I think we can all be very proud as teachers, parents and supporters of these young people.

**Local Government
and community agencies
providing support services for
student networking and
training.**

The SRC Conference 5th April, 2001

Supported by Hume City Council, Moreland City Council and Anglicare Youth Services in conjunction with Youth Week 2001. Folders and pens kindly donated by the Commonwealth Bank.

Secondary Schools from the Hume and Moreland area were invited to participate in a conference with the focus on SRCs in schools. The students who attended were highly motivated and extremely keen to learn more about their SRCs and how to operate them more effectively and efficiently. The atmosphere was energetic, friendly and open, so students felt free to exchange information and past experiences. The students networked freely and made the conference an enjoyable success.

Ideas about belonging to your school rather than just attending your school arose. Students stressed the need to be a part of their school, to be a part of the decision making that directly related to them. After all, it was their school and they wanted to have a say about issues that related to them. Ultimately students wanted to have a voice that was heard in their school.

It was truly great to see students exchanging ideas, networking across schools and being inspired to take ownership and pride in their school. Students listened to each other, respected the opinions of others and gave genuine advice to each other. The workshops concentrated on how to get ideas working and how to be a democratic, responsible SRC representative. Strategies on how to maximise negotiations with other relevant school bodies and students were also discussed.

The SRC students who attended the conference were an inspiration to work with and I wish them all the very best for their future years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all, whole heartedly, for making the conference such an enjoyable success. The students are to be congratulated on the manner in which they all participated and their schools should be proud of them!!!

Helga Moss

JSCs and Peer Mediation

The Gresswell Cluster Network of Junior School Councils, in Melbourne's northern suburbs, has been working together for approximately 12 years to support the operation of student organisations in these individual primary schools, to develop ways of making student participation in the schools more effective, and to share information and advice about what they do. An important part of the Network's program has been the conduct of student forums - usually several times a year - at which students from JSCs come together to share information and to learn from each other.

(In 1996, the Network wrote and published the book **Democracy Starts Here: Junior School Councils at Work**, which is available from Connect.)

Junior School Councils in each of these schools play an important role in decision-making and program implementation in the schools. They link student representatives from classrooms to wider decision making, identify issues within the schools, and develop and implement initiatives to enhance student welfare.

Students at this group of schools come from a diverse range of backgrounds, economically, socially and culturally. Over recent years, JSC students have identified a need to be trained and supported to reduce the incidence and impact of aggression, conflict, racism and isolation ("have no-one to play with"). They have identified a need for students to play roles in meeting these challenges.

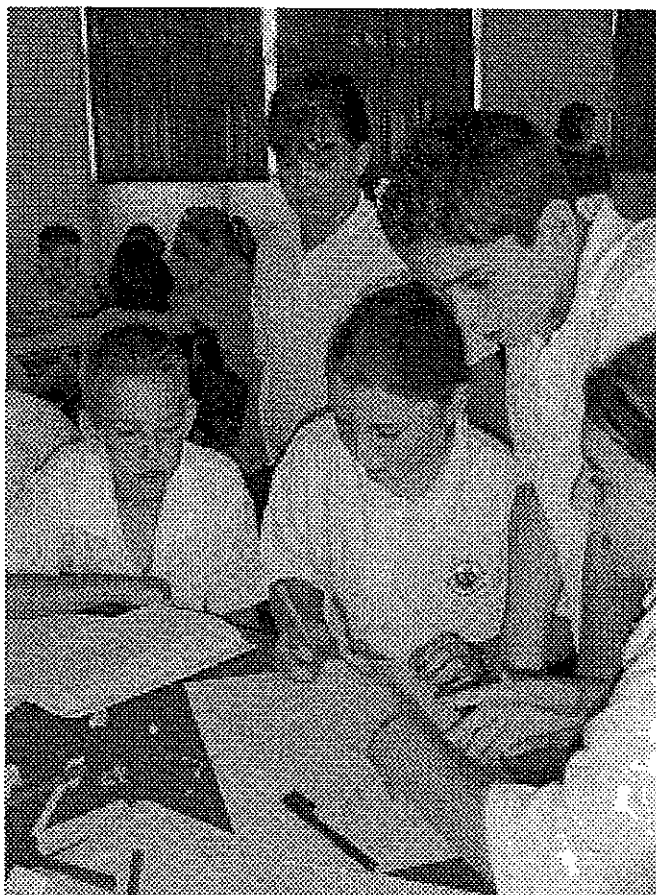
The JSC Network has discussed ways in which it might build and support the mediation and peer support roles of JSC representatives through specific training in these areas.

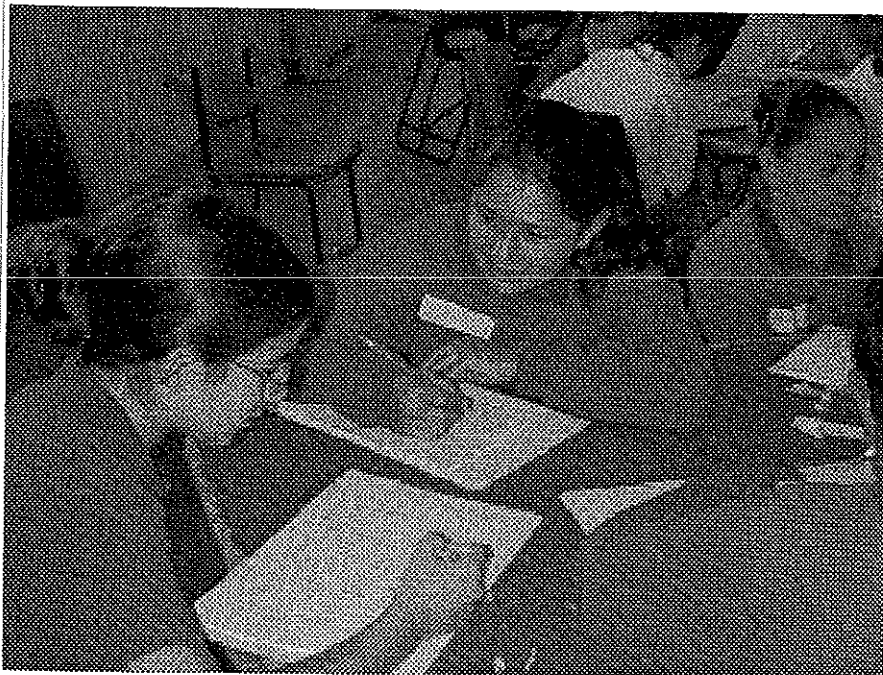
In 2001, the Network has taken on this particular focus - on students solving real problems through peer support and mediation. Through this program, JSC students and their support teachers

will be trained to recognise and be proactive in meeting the needs of students around issues of isolation, social skills and aggression. The program will focus on training JSC representatives as skilled providers of mediation and support services within the school environment - the playground and the classroom.

The first part of this program was the provision of two-day training sessions for a core group of JSC and other students within the Network's eleven schools. These training days were

held in March, and were led by Fred Stern, an experienced Peer Mediation trainer, based at Anglicare in Glenroy. Grade 5 and 6 students attended, and learnt about the range of conflict issues commonly met in the school environment (name calling, invading personal space, spreading rumours, bullying, racism and so on), and what they could do about it. They developed some peer mediation approaches and skills, and practised them at the workshops.





Fred Stern states that the program "is based on the value and belief that conflict can be positive because it signals the need for change and offers opportunity for us to learn about ourselves and other people. Encouragement is offered for direct and peaceful expression of conflict where there is a strong belief that resolutions are best reached voluntarily by the disputants in conflict with the help of neutral third parties."

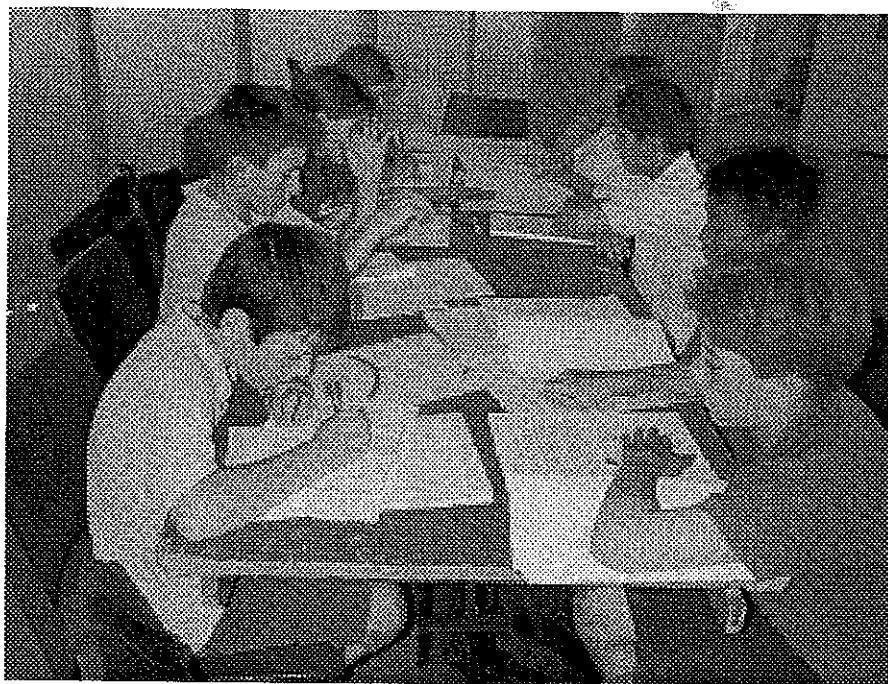
It is intended that these trained students will now form a team within the Network that can work within individual schools (for example, having conflict situations referred to them by staff) and between schools. The practice of peer support and mediation will operate in the schools under the management of the Junior School Councils and their support teachers. The teachers will continue to meet within the Network to monitor the program and share information, concerns and solutions.

Between schools, these students will become resources for student forums to be held later in the year. At these forums, students from the JSCs at the schools will meet for a half day to discuss progress and problems within individual JSCs, to encourage and help each other, and to share good practice. The trained Peer Mediators will lead workshops to share techniques and approaches that they have learnt and

have been practising. The intention is that the skills and confidence of JSCs to be 'problem solvers' within their schools will be increased.

Later in the year, it has been planned that the JSCs will expand their focus to look at problem solving within a community context. It is hoped that the students will carry out some research, during a student forum, into what are seen locally as issues of conflict and problems, perhaps in a local shopping centre. The students may then use the skills they are developing to brainstorm solutions to community conflict and present these to the appropriate authorities.

The Network will provide further information as these initiatives develop. It is hoped that this experience will build a model that links JSCs and peer mediation/support in primary schools, as well as meeting the needs of students within these particular schools.



For more information, contact:

Thérèse West

Preston South Primary School
PO Box 1527, South Preston 3072
phone: (03) 9484 1544

or

Carol Humphreys

Reservoir East Primary School
Boldrewood Parade, Reservoir 3073
phone: (03) 9460 1560

News and Reviews

National Youth Conference in Perth

The Office of Youth Affairs WA, will be holding a National Youth Conference in Perth on 21-23 September 2001, at the Perth Sheraton Hotel, as part of the Centenary of Federation celebrations.

The theme for the conference is "Imagine Your Australia" - giving young people the opportunity to reflect on the past, and plan for the future.

Confirmed speakers for the conference include Sandra Hill - reflecting on Australia's indigenous history; Jason Li ; Shelly Gare (journalist and editor -speaking on the image of youth in the media); Mia Handshin (Australian Youth Representative to UNESCO - speaking on the responsibility of Australia in a global context); and James Fitzpatrick (Young Australian of the Year).

To resource the delegates in their task, a national web based survey will be carried out during the three months prior to the conference. We encourage all young Australians between 13 and 25 years to take part in the survey.

The planned outcome of the conference will be a National Youth Declaration, which will be presented to representatives from all levels of government - including Youth Ministers from every State and Territory, who have advised that they will come to Perth for this purpose.

Delegates to the conference must be between 18-25 years (due to duty of care issues). We can only accept about 350 - 400 delegates.

Conference fee is \$200 for the three days - and covers morning and afternoon teas, lunches and the

conference dinner. (Interstate and regional delegates are responsible for air fares and accommodation - and we have written to every local government in Australia asking them to sponsor a young person from their area to the conference.)

The Governor of WA, Lt Gen John Sanderson, will officially launch the Youth Festival and Conference - and the festival website www.imagineoz.com.au at the Art Gallery of Western Australia on Friday 20th April. This is the centrepiece event for our State, and WA is the only State putting a focus specifically on youth over the centenary celebrations. The conference will be followed by a week of youth festivals - Arts, Science and Technology, Environment, Music, Film and Sport.

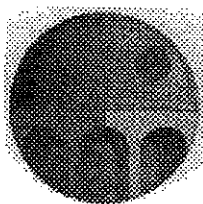
The festivals will be worked up and developed with planning groups of young people, and we have formed Festival Teams of young students undertaking tertiary studies in PR, Event Management, Journalism, Marketing and Sports Administration to be involved in the planning and execution of everything to do with the Centenary of Federation Youth Festival. The event has been built into curriculum, and work placement will be the actual work on the launch, conference and festivals. This will be strictly a 'youth driven' series of events and activities.

For further info - please contact Libby Winchcombe, the conference coordinator, on phone 08 9228 0808 or at conference@westrek.com.au.

Jan Watt jwatt@oya.wa.gov.au

Bridging the Gap

State forums:

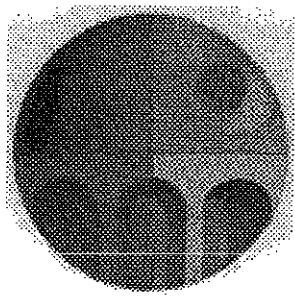


"The role of education in overcoming the increasing distance between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'."

As part of the process of the National Education and Employment Forum (see opposite page), state forums have been and are being held in each area of Australia. For example, the Victorian State Forum will be held on **May 4, 2001** at Holmesglen Conference Centre, Chadstone. (Cost: \$30)

For details, contact Dr Gordon Young, NEEF Victoria, 13 Tambour Road, Templestowe 3106. Phone (03) 9846 1319.

In other areas, contact jmnorton@ozemail.com.au or Dr. Anne Feeney anne.feeney@uq.net.au to find out when and where your closest forum will be held.



Bridging the Gap

Carlton Crest Hotel, Ann Street Brisbane

16 - 17 August 2001

The National Education and Employment Forum, initiated by The World Education Fellowship, brings together the community, industry, all education sectors and government to look at the most serious issue facing our future:

Bridging the Gap

The role of education in overcoming the increasing distance between the 'Haves' and the 'Have nots'

The National Forum follows a series of State forums through 2000 and 2001. Findings of the State forums will be explored and expanded.

Who will be there?

High profile academics, business chief executives, educators, politicians and community leaders will lead the debate across fields including education, child and adult development, pedagogy, economics, sociology, social welfare, community development and public policy. **and most importantly - young people, as participants in education**, will be able to chat on the web about Forum topics in the months leading up to the Forum.

Conference Facilitator: Professor Neil Dempster, Griffith University

Confirmed Speakers and panellists include:

Kurt Larsen, OECD; Robert Stimson, University of Queensland; Julian Disney, International Council of Social Welfare; Michael Raper, Director, ACOSS; John Spierings, Research Strategist, Dusseldorp Skills Forum; Mark Bagshaw International Marketing Manager IBM; Moira Scollay, CEO, ANTA; Kip Cole, Director, Marketing, CISCO; Sue Richardson, Director, National Labour Institute; Jim Cumming, Australian College of Education; Margaret Henry, Queensland University of Technology; David Akers, Brisbane City Council; Christine Wykes, WEF International; Phil Candy, DVC, Ballarat University; Terri Seddon, Monash University; David Saunders, Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Gerald Burke, Monash University; Penny Tripcony, Chair, Indigenous Education Consultative Body; David Wyatt, Consultant; Mark Paterson, CEO, ACCI; John Edwards, Education Consultant.

THIS IS NOT YOUR EVERYDAY CONFERENCE!

This will be an interactive forum where YOU as the participants will work together to finalise strategies that will be collated into a Proposal for Policy and Action to be presented to Federal Parliament and the State Parliaments.

An Invitation to Contribute ...

Young people are invited to take part in the Conference, or to present strategies for consideration. The following is a tentative list of questions for young people to discuss. All are related to developing creative 'out of the circle' strategies to address the gaps in education/training:

Schooling: how should it be changed to challenge all students in an exciting way? eg what should schools look like? what should be their role in the community? what kinds of teachers should we have? what kinds of strategies can we develop for universities to better train teachers for the teaching and learning in the 'new economy'?

What strategies can we develop to enhance the creative imagination so that unemployment does not mean welfare dependence?

What different strategies would you like to see developed for addressing the 'early leaver' situation?

What role and responsibilities does the corporate sector have to youth and their education?

How can we bridge the 'digital divide' so that governments in partnerships with the corporate sector can provide free access to all young people for education /training purposes?

How can youth and the whole community assist in providing the best education of Indigenous peoples?

What strategies should government develop with the community to make Australia the centre of research and development, including IT, in the Asia Pacific Region?

Send your contributions to: Dr. Anne Feeney <anne.feeney@uq.net.au>

HOW TO REGISTER

You can register your interest now at e-mail jmnorton@ozemail.com.au Registration fee of \$200 includes all conference sessions, and conference dinner.

The Ozacomm Group will assist you with registration, accommodation and airfares.

Major sponsors to date: Queensland Government; TAFE Queensland; University of Queensland; Australian Scholarships Group Friendly Society Ltd; Rotary International, 9600; WACOSS; VCOSS; Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training; Australian Council WEF.

Australian Curriculum
Studies Association
2001 Biennial Conference

Education Futures & New Citizenships

Saturday 29 September to
Monday 1 October 2001

Canberra

Come to Canberra in the year of the Centenary of Federation and explore the current and future agenda for curriculum studies in this country.

The Conference will feature:

- the Garth Boomer memorial lecture and the presentation of the Garth Boomer Award in memory of a major Australian educator.
- major keynotes by Australian educators.
- a wide range of 2 and 3 session Workshops - including Indigenous education, technology and curriculum, middle schooling, new approaches to curriculum and assessment, students as researchers, teaching standards, school-university partnership projects, 'at risk' students, unpacking the new vocationalism, gender, class and school achievement, and rural education.
- a major Schools poster session - to showcase school developments and innovations.
- conference papers - exploring issues in curriculum development, reform, assessment, theory and practice.
- demonstrations and displays - of software, new curriculum documents, school-produced materials and books.

Registration forms, the call for papers and further information at the ACSA website:

www.acsa.edu.au

WANTED:

Students to take part in curriculum discussions and debates - on panels, in workshops, present poster displays ...

Contact the ACSA Conference Organisers:

web: www.acsa.edu.au

OTHER STUDENT PARTICIPATION SUPPORT MATERIALS

AVAILABLE

See the back page of this issue of *Connect* for listings and order form

Resource Materials on Active Citizenship

Democracy Starts Here: Junior School Councils at Work

This 48-page book was produced by teachers and students from a group of schools in the north of Melbourne in 1996. Stories from 10 primary schools describe the operation and focus of their Junior School Councils. Then each school provides a brief answer to key practical questions:

- How many people are on your JSC?
 - How do you get to be on your JSC?
 - What grades are represented?
 - When does the JSC meet?
- and so on.

An invaluable resource for developing active citizenship in primary schools!

\$7 a copy (posted); \$12 for 2 copies

- from *Connect* - see back page

Discovering Democracy in Action: Learning from School Practice

Twenty-five primary and secondary schools in Victoria explored how to use the *Discovering Democracy* materials in their Civics and Citizenship Education approaches during 1999 and 2000. They then wrote about their experiences. A 'whole school approach' is outlined, within which many schools explored what active citizenship meant - along with classroom teaching and learning, school ethos development and community linkages.

The stories from school practice enable us to learn about possible approaches for our schools!

Available from the

Youth Research Centre, Faculty of Education
The University of Melbourne Vic 3010

Fax: (03) 8344 9632

FREE - just ask!

Various back issues of *Connect*

Each issue of *Connect* contains stories about active citizenship in the classroom and in school governance. These stories of Junior School Councils, Student Representative Councils, classroom approaches and projects - all illustrate practical ideas for recognising and developing the active citizenship of young people.

Back copies of *Connect* are available (see back page):

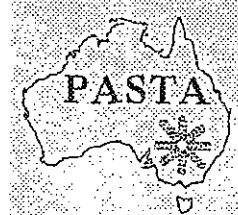
\$4 for a single issue or \$6 for a double issue.

An index to the contents of back issues is available.

PASTA NEWSLETTER

22 - April 2001

PASTA is the acronym of the Professional Association of Student Representative Council Teacher/Advisors. Founded in New South Wales, Australia, in February 1995, our Association exists to support in whatever ways possible those who work with and support programs of student participation, representation and leadership.



SEE OUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION AND APPLICATION FORM ON THE WEBSITE

PASS THE PASTA

When I became a member of PASTA at its inaugural Annual General Meeting held at Stewart House Sydney in 1995, I had just two years' experience as the SRC Teacher Adviser at Kogarah High School. That same year I had the benefit of much greater experience when Bob Kijurina shared his expertise and helped me coordinate a successful one-day Conference on Alternatives to Violence for Metropolitan East High School SRC representatives.

In June of 1998, motivated by Ralph Murray's vision for the youth of our nation, my husband Graham and I joined Ralph and Christine Murray, Ken and Sue Page on the inaugural visit of PASTA representatives to the National Association of Student Councils Conference for 2000 high school students in Derby, Kansas and the National Leadership Camp which followed at Outlaw Ranch, South Dakota USA. Later on in October, Graham and I accepted an invitation from Regional Director Maris Aldridge to attend the 44th Annual Conference for 700 students from the Montana Association of Student Councils held at Helena High School, Montana USA.

Volunteering is not a new experience for me. In life there will always be a myriad of opportunities to become involved by volunteering one's skills and expertise. After the experience of a year on the Australia Day Committee of Kogarah Municipal Council, learning about the coordination of that event for 10,000 people, I believed, with the encouragement of others, that I could successfully administer the Inaugural International SRC Conference in Sydney in December 2000. With the comment of another, noted for his quotable quotes, that "It's hard to stuff up something kids want to do. You'll know it was successful if they want to do

it again!", ISRC 2000 became a challenge for me and a lot of hard work as well. The conference was successful.

ISRC 2000 was a lot of hard work by a handful of people and I want to thank each one for their personal contribution. At the end of the conference, delegates had produced 58 recommendations for action on a local, national or international level. These have been published and are presently being mailed out. A student delegation will take the recommendations to the United Nations in New York in June and, what's more, delegates want to meet again in Thailand, or Pennsylvania, or Canada, or some other host country, in December 2002!

I wish to personally thank people in the support organisations who had sufficient confidence in me to let the plan for ISRC 2000 run and to give their support. In particular they are: Mr George Green and Mr Brian Smyth King from the NSW Department of Education and Training, Dr David Smith from The University of Sydney, and Professor Les Eastcott from the Central Coast Campus of the University of Newcastle, who by their support enabled more than 260 High School students to play a more active part in shaping their future in the world. Then there are those who had sufficient confidence in the team to bring a National or State delegation to the conference. In particular they are: Rocco Marano (USA), Gane Olsen (Canada), Larry King (Chief, Akwesasne Canada), Supaporn Jansiriyotin and Juree Sroypett (Thailand), Michelle and Eric Cripps (Tasmania) all of whom, by their participation, guided, motivated and empowered



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more than 125 young people who came with them to play a more active part in shaping their future in the world.

Our visits to the US have strengthened the national focus of PASTA by recruiting delegates from five states and PASTA is currently investigating structures for the establishment of State Branches in Australia. The 1st International Student Representative Conference, driven by Charles Kingston's dream to bring North America to Australia, which also had representatives from Germany, Slovenia and Thailand, has established PASTA's international presence. Our challenge for the future is to build on this success and encourage the development of SRC structures in schools everywhere through a Biennial Olympiad of Citizenship, aimed at raising the awareness of youth issues and concerns on the world stage. This is now a real possibility as we find new partners to work on the dream.

Active citizenship in schools leads to activities that address the needs of young people. I hope that all delegates will copy and distribute the Recommendations from ISRC 2000. Distribution to SRCs in all New South Wales government schools will not only give recognition to the achievement but will stimulate student activities and give some direction for SRCs during the next two years. Similarly, all representatives from other states and countries have the opportunity to act on those recommendations that are appropriate to their situation. Students are encouraged to look at key issues that **were not** discussed and work toward their inclusion on the agenda for ISRC 2002.

For Teacher Advisors in Australia, ISRC 2000 was an opportunity lost forever. Although promoted as a dual conference for students and Teacher Advisors, only 35 availed themselves of the opportunity - five from New South Wales, one from South Australia and one from Tasmania. There are two messages in this. Firstly, that professional development of SRC Teacher Advisors in Australia has low priority. Even though direction was given in New South Wales that Training and Development

funds could be used for teacher registration, the **extra curricular** role of SRCs in schools is probably the reason little funding was allocated. And secondly that PASTA's own active membership of SRC Teacher Advisors needs serious attention.

We all have an opportunity to develop a vision for the future. Future committee meetings and AGMs will be followed by a professional development opportunity for SRC Teacher Advisors. PASTA members have collected many resources over the last five years which could form the basis of workshops or discussion groups and 'melting pots', while calling in the 'experts' is always an option. Citizenship however does not belong to the History in Society and the Environment (HSIE) syllabus nor are citizens 'taught' only by HSIE teachers. Active citizens, as we all know, come from every walk of life, and active citizens are often motivated to articulate the needs of others sharing their skills in a community setting where they work as volunteers. This is true of all SRC Teacher Advisors!

It's been a challenging and often stressful year with so few adult volunteers on the team. As chief administrator, at the end of ISRC 2000 and a year of working two full time jobs, I felt very negative. I felt a bit like Michael Knight at the end of the Olympics. It's a challenging task juggling all the pieces and with such a diverse group of personalities it has been impossible to be positive towards everyone all of the time.

I wish to thank all of the Executive Committee for their hard work with ISRC 2000, the 3rd PASTA USA Tour to California and Canada, and the Community Service Certificate Awards Program, for their patience, perseverance, and hard work this year on behalf of PASTA Incorporated - Australia. The challenge is there for us in 2001 to achieve a higher profile for SRCs in an inclusive curriculum and to better equip SRC Teacher Advisors in our schools so they can fulfil their dream to empower young people to take a more active role in Building a Better Today for the youth of tomorrow.

Jeanne Bow
President, PASTA Inc

FOR MEMBERSHIP AND SUPPORT DETAILS - SEE THE PASTA WEBSITE

<http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE FOLLOWING:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| • PASTA Memberships and Professional Development Activities: | bowtech@ozemail.com.au |
| • OVERSEAS TOURS (for advisers and students): | suepage@ozemail.com.au |
| • CSC AWARDS (Community Service Certificate Program): | RalphMurray@bigpond.com.au |
| • ISRC, International Linkages and Projects: | asamson@wesley.usyd.edu.au |
| • Website and Independent/Systemic Schools: | ckingston@interact.net.au |

ISRC 2000

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The formal printed recommendations stemming from the 1st Student Representative Conference ISRC 2000 - December 2000 in Sydney and the Central Coast NSW) have now been published and distributed to all delegates, supporters and others who have indicated their interest. Together with the Canadian Resolutions, these are now also available on PASTA's website.

The Recommendations are divided into five areas, reflecting the four daily themes of ISRC 2000 and the future of such global gatherings:

"Celebrating Our Cultural Diversity" (Subheadings here are 'Multicultural Awareness' and 'Indigenous Peoples');

"Challenges Facing Young People in the 21st Century" (Subheadings of 'Discrimination', 'Health', 'Voluntarism', 'School Environment', 'Education Systems' and 'Global Campaigns');

"The Environment: Conserving Our Future" (Subheadings are 'Environmental Health Problems', 'Awareness of Environmental Problems', 'General' and 'Indigenous Issues');

"The Media, Political Process and You";

"ISRC: Its structure, function, and future".

In extracts from the recommendations Report in this and the next issue of this newsletter, two key individuals in the whole process of staging the conference comment on the intensely deliberative process which led to them, and on the future vision that now awaits a larger audience. Ralph Murray, PASTA's Immediate Past President, current Vice President - Metropolitan Schools and member of ISRC is also currently fulfilling the role of Acting Executive Director for ISRC futures. His 'pilogue' to the printed Recommendations follows.

Next issue:

Following Ralph's visionary message will be a report from Anna Samson - Convener, Student Fair, Programming Committee and now the new Vice-President - National/International of PASTA. Anna was the ISRC 2000 Committee member most actively involved with the Recommendation and Action Plan process before, during, and now, following the event.

My faith and belief in the youth of today helped me to focus on how to build a better today. For our youth, tomorrow is too late, so the solution was to build an historical foundation upon which all our collective efforts "to save the world" could be measured and evaluated.

The 1st International Student Representative Conference, with its debating and passing of its recommendations, has focused our attention on the key problems confronting our student leaders today. These recommendations can now go forward to form the content and focus of the student representative movement within our schools and their communities, and provide a useful framework within which both action research and school and community based student action programs can commence and be monitored.

Internationally we have formed links with those nations most advanced in the support of student representation within schools and so we have drawn upon the world's best in expertise, historical experience in student activity, co-ordination and organisation, and youthful enthusiasm and drive.

Those who found their way to Sydney, now have the challenge to take up the recommendations of the 1st ISRC and to prepare to evaluate their progress to date at the 2nd ISRC at the same time, but in a different country, in 2002. In this way the school student representatives of those countless millions of the world's youth in every country of our world, have an opportunity to represent their constituency and to initiate action to improve both the quality of life of our youth and their ability to participate in the problem solving and decision making that directly effects both them and their planet.

The 1st ISRC was not the end of a wonderful dream but the beginning of one. A dream now shared by hundreds and, with your commitment, soon thousands and tens of thousands of student representative activists, all working towards redressing the wrongs of our world and to building a better today.

Ralph Murray
Founder ISRC, Acting Executive Director

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Email: ralphmurray@bigpond.com.au

YOU TELL US!

**Are you a Teacher? Consultant?
Departmental Adviser? Student? Principal?
Parent? Grandparent? Interested Citizen?**

*Whoever you are,
tell us what you think is needed in this field.*

With ISRC 2000 completed, our CSC Awards and Overseas Tours established:

- What do you think PASTA should be doing now?
- What are your most pressing needs in student activities? Civics and Citizenship Education? Leadership Curriculum? Colleague Support?
- What topics/speakers/processes should adviser seminars have?
- What marvellous successful (or not) projects have you undertaken?
- How can communication with you, your schools and systems be improved?
- Which student and adult citizens do you have deserving of CSC Awards?

How? See the 'How To Contact Us' page on our Website: <http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

PASTA MEMBERSHIP

- Membership in PASTA means you/your school/your SRC or your business is taking on the responsibility of supporting the promotion and development of active citizenship education in Australia.
- By your membership, you enable SRC and other leadership activity advisers to distribute and create resources, programs, networks, professional development opportunities and leadership events.
- All members receive a subscription to **Connect**, discounts on PASTA organised events, access to national and international student council networks and resources unavailable elsewhere in Australia, and the very real opportunity to be involved in the future of SRCs and citizenship education and recognition now and in the future.
- School and other institutional members also receive a starter kit to enable them to carry out the CSC Awards Program for all their students or members.
- For the mere cost of one night's dinner at a medium priced restaurant, you can do and have all this for a year. Concession rates available for student and retired members.

More info? Check out 'How To Join' page on our Website: <http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

OVERSEAS SRC LEADERSHIP TOURS

- *For secondary school student representatives*
- *For teacher/advisers to leadership activity programs*

PASTA has organised tours so far to student/adviser summer activities in the United States and Canada. International Representatives attend the NASC Annual Conferences in various parts of the USA and week long summer leadership camps in various states or provinces. Host school visits are also a vital part of these four week tours. 2001 and future tours are now seeking both student and adviser applicants. The 65th NASC Conference will be in North Carolina in June 2001, Virginia in 2002 and Buffalo New York in 2003.

**Check it out on our Website or contact
Ken and Sue Page: suepage@ozemail.com.au**

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING AND ANNUAL EVENTS

- **14 May: PASTA Committee Meeting:** 11 am Professional Teachers Council Offices, corner Marion and Norton Streets, Leichhardt, Sydney. All current and new members welcome to attend.
- **May - November:** PASTA will be organising two or more SRC Adviser Professional Development Conferences. Successful **Form One Lane** one day teacher development activities continue through PASTA Victoria.
- **June/July (annually) - PASTA Overseas Tours.** Orientation in Term 1 - 2 break. *Applications/down payments for 2001 Tour now due.*
- **Late June (annually) - NASC - National Association of Student Council (USA) Conference:** 2001 - North Carolina ; 2002 - Virginia
- **July 2001 - Alberta, Canada SYLC (Summer Youth Leadership Camp) -** a part of PASTA's annual Overseas Leadership Tours curriculum
- **5 - 12 August: 4th session, World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, Dakar, Senegal:** <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/youth>
- **early August: NSW State SRC Conference,** Vision Valley (contact the NSW Department of Education and Training for details)
- **September (annually) - Canadian Student Leadership Conferences (CSLC) 2001 -** in Nova Scotia (east coast); 2002 - in Saskatchewan (plains)
- **October 2001 - International Youth Conference:** Nepal (Tigertops - Chitwan) - Inter-Youth Coordination Council; contact: chauyen@col.com.np
- **November (annually) - NASAA (National Association of Student Activity Advisers - USA) Conference:** various locations throughout USA

The PASTA Newsletter is edited by PASTA and distributed bi-monthly as a supplement to *Connect* magazine.

Student Action Teams

Over the past two years (1999 and 2000), a group of Victorian secondary schools has implemented and supported Student Action Teams (SATs). In these Teams, students carried out significant and important work on community projects as part of their curriculum: they researched, developed plans and proposals, made recommendations and initiated action around the common theme of **community safety**.

The Student Action Team Project is a joint initiative of the Victorian Departments of Justice and of Education, Employment and Training. Teams were initially set up in 20 schools across Victoria, with eleven of these supported into a second year of operation. The initial training for teachers and students was provided by the Australian Red Cross - Victoria.

Within each school, students discussed and decided on what community safety meant, and what were the most relevant and pressing needs in their communities. They then carried out local research around their topic to find out what the situation was, what students and other community members thought, what needed to be done, what **could** be done and what

would be effective action. Sometimes the Team consisted of a small group of students who met during their spare classes or at lunchtime or were withdrawn from other classes; in other cases, the Team met as a class, or within a subject, or as part of the Student Council.

A 'How To' Manual describing the decisions that have to be made in forming and operating a Student Action Team, is currently in production. This Manual will also contain forms and other resources that will assist the operation of Teams. **Connect** will bring you further information about its availability.

The following short accounts from some of the Student Action Teams illustrate the different issues identified and tackled within these schools.

Altona Secondary College

Altona Secondary College is located in Melbourne's western suburbs. The school population in 1999-2000 was approximately 500 students, and from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

The SAT at Altona started its work by researching truancy within the school - why students truant, what they did and so on. The focus came to be on providing activities for students (so they wouldn't truant), and on developing a school Student Discipline and Welfare Policy so that students had some definitive guidelines which could be understood by all in the school community.

In 1999, four students were on the SAT; these were from years 9 to 11, and were two males and two females. Even though these students were not all the formal 'leaders' in the school, they were chosen for the team because they were leaders in their own group. At least a couple of the students had already exhibited a significant rate of absenteeism. But all were seen as having leadership qualities - for better or worse in some cases. Teachers were open about these reasons with the students and approached this group with a proposal that they make up the team. Team membership was portrayed positively, and was seen to provide them with importance and direction.

In 2000, there were again four students on the team. This was substantially a new group, and they were chosen for similar reasons to those of the 1999 team.

The team met fortnightly or as required, with students withdrawn from classes. There was an attempt

to match these times with spare classes for the senior students. The team approached these meetings in a structured and formal, but also relaxed manner.

The team met with the school Administration, and with the Adolescent Health Team, to discuss issues and to approve their directions. The team began by making a survey of students about truancy: why they truant, how often and what they do. They then developed action proposals based on this evidence. The students also focused on student initiated strategies to be put to School Council for implementation in Semester 2, 2000.

This marked a broadening of the focus into 2000, from student absenteeism to general student behaviour. One strategy for improving attendance from the first year of operation was to develop a more workable Discipline and Welfare Policy so that students had definitive guidelines which, along with activities and curriculum initiatives, would hopefully ensure the attendance of 'waggers' and students at risk. The Team conducted a review of the Policy, collecting student, parent, staff and community input, and putting the Policy proposals to the staff review committee. The Policy developed by the Team was finally accepted by the staff at the end of 2000.

At the same time, the Altona SAT also worked on setting up lunchtime activities for students such as a radio station, a debating club, dance, and sports. These activities were all designed to diversify school-based activities, to make school more 'interesting' and thus hold students who would otherwise truant.

The Team has had its Student Discipline and Welfare Policy accepted by the staff. Both this, and the activities developed by the team, are seen to have created an improved atmosphere within the school, and have played a significant role in decreasing the incidence of truancy and misbehaviour, and ultimately making for a safer environment in the school and wider community.

Students have developed many skills and attributes in the areas of research, leadership, problem-solving, initiative, and achieving goals. They have increased their understanding of democratic and consultative processes, and of the value of research, and experienced success in establishing a safer environment and in creating opportunities for their peers. They have taken both accreditation and experience from this project.

Karingal Park Secondary College

Karingal Park Secondary College is the largest single-campus state secondary college in Victoria, with over 1700 students. It is located in the Frankston area, drawing students from 30 different primary schools.

The focus of the Student Action Team was on increasing the safety of students and others in the light of specific local issues. Initially, in its first year, this work focused around a specific track near the school, where there had been some major incidents, including a murder; the team then moved on, in the second year, to build awareness of the dangers of behaviour and alternatives to what students perceive as the appropriate or expected behaviour during 'muck-up' time.

These issues were aimed at:

- increasing students' feeling of safety near the school;
- helping to prevent deaths and/or injuries;
- avoiding thoughtless behaviour that is threatening to the community;
- inspiring young people to seek alternative entertainment;
- educating young people about the resources available to them.

The first issue was to improve the safety of a pathway that is an access route to the school, on which a girl had been recently murdered. Since then students had not felt safe using it. The team interviewed people in the school about the track, to find out what they wanted. They met with the principal, developed realistic action plans, and the senior students also met with junior students. They also met with the local Council and Police to form a committee to ensure action was taken.

Ultimately, the track was resurfaced and graded, fences were fixed by the golf clubs on either side of the track, and trees and bushes were cut back to allow visibility for track users. A 'lollipop' man was contracted for the relevant school traffic period, as visibility was impeded by a huge hump in the middle of the track where the city's gas supply pipe was located. A memorial stone seat and bollard were installed at the Skye Road end of the track, and all were unveiled at a memorial for the sixth anniversary of the death of the young woman.

In the second year, a community safety issue came to the attention of students: the behaviour of student particularly year 12, during the end of school year period. A student died and two others were seriously injured when they were drink driving, without a licence, after year 12 party. It was recognised that this time of year makes many in the school and wider community feel unsafe, and concerned for their physical and psychological well-being. In addition, there was concern about student attitudes to and involvement in drinking, driving, drugs, suicide, self-esteem etc.

A forum - Driving for Life - was organised for Karingal's Year 11 and 12 students, and involved speakers from VicRoads, TAC, SES, victims of accidents and so on talking about safe driving. In addition, the forum led to the College's 'Arthurs Seat Challenge': the Student Action Team helped to organise a fun run to raise money to support a program by VicRoads called 'Keys Please'. These funds support a program to help parents learn how to teach their kids to drive, pay for driving lessons for those unable to afford them, and provide an advanced skills driving course for P-plate drivers.

Both these issues were chosen as part of the considerations of the community safety group that is part of the College's Student Leadership Council (SLC).

The SLC involves a broad cross-section of the student population, not just academic students. To join it, students write a short nomination and the whole school year level votes. SLC students attend a camp at the beginning of each year, at which priorities for the year work are set. A community safety sub-committee of the SLC was set up at this camp. Students initially self-select onto the SLC sub-committee because of their interest. The community safety sub-group consisted of seven students from different year levels (7 to 11). More older students became involved as the younger ones needed guidance and better organisational and public speaking skills.

In its second year, the team involved 12 students both boys and girls, from years 7 to 12. It is planned that in the future, the SAT would involve three SLC members to act as a Steering Committee, plus 6-8 members from the general school populace, selected through interview.

There have been several positive community outcomes of the SAT's work. Where people were afraid to use the track where the young woman died, students and community members now feel safer, and use it more frequently. The track has been resurfaced, a memorial in place, there has been liaison between the golf club, council, police, schools etc.

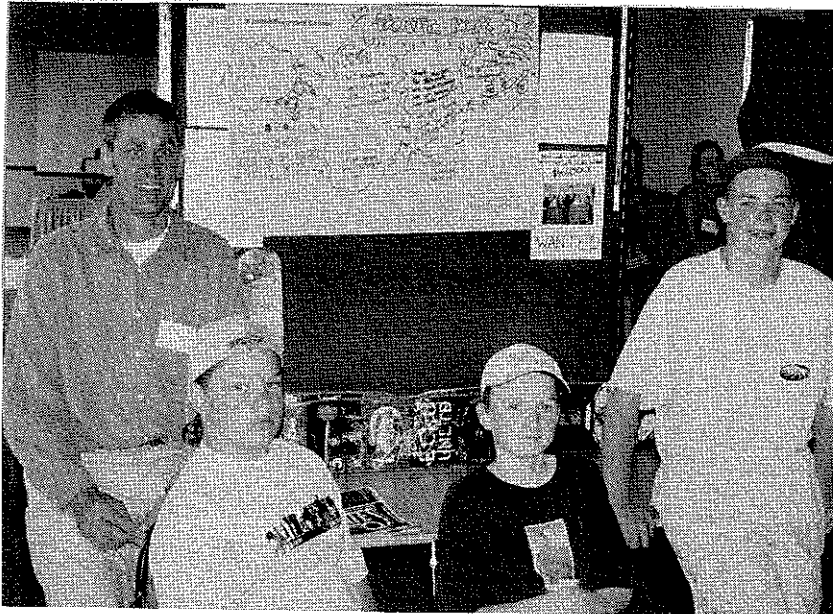
From the second year, year 11 and 12 students were taught to drive safely. There were no crashes during the year. Also, there was positive feedback and attitudes from the year 11 and 12 students, and an increased awareness of the importance of driving safely.

Over all this, a positive outcome has been seen: young people have success and having their effort appreciated and rewarded by the community.

The students on the SAT feel that they have worked well together. There has been improvement in their public speaking skills, their confidence, initiative, self-esteem and ability to verbalise and present ideas. Their increased confidence has been shown in interviews on radio and TV, in their acceptance of awards, and in their ability

make speeches. They are able to address a variety of people and circumstances appropriately. Practically, they have learnt how to write press releases and formal letters, how to approach people personally, and give input at meetings (eg with the local council).

Members of the team seem more aware of the breadth of community issues and of how much is included. They are more aware that they have power, will be listened to, and have their ideas considered and acted on. They are important members of community who have some control over their environment.



Kyneton Secondary College

Kyneton Secondary College is located at Kyneton in the Macedon Ranges Shire, 86 kilometres north west of Melbourne. The school has approximately 750 students, drawn from Kyneton and the surrounding areas of Lancefield, Romsey, Woodend, Malmsbury and Taradale.

The Student Action Team at Kyneton Secondary College worked for two years on the development of a skate park for the area. The student team was engaged in fund-raising and negotiating to help develop skateboarding facilities in the Kyneton community. This involved developing links with the local community, drawing up plans, running a skate competition to raise public awareness, and promoting a more positive image in the community.

A group of students were already interested in getting a skate park in Kyneton. There had been discussion amongst this group of young people for several years. For example, in 1997-1998, various groups of young people were using the Primary School site for skating and they then wanted an area of their own.

This issue identified the team. Team members were drawn from students in years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Approximately 10 to 15 students formed the team. Most team members were male, but a number of female students helped them and worked with them. The students were seen as marginalised within the school and the broader community. As meetings went on, more and more students became interested and wanted to join in

with the team. During the first year, the team varied between 12 and 20 students from Years 7 to 11, and were meeting each week.

Throughout 1999 and 2000, the team worked on issues surrounding the establishment of a Skate Park. In November 1999, a very successful Skate Competition was held, involving over 200 participants and spectators.

The conduct of this skate competition was a project highlight. The ability of young people to organise and run a successful event is a great achievement which boosted their self-esteem. The project built links between these students and the broader school community, improved and built on relationships with students generally, and showed that they can involve themselves in and run something for the local community.

The feedback from the community on this program was very successful, and this support assisted in the achievement of a \$40,000 grant to the Macedon Ranges Shire from the Department of Sport and Recreation for skate parks at Lancefield, Woodend, Gisborne and Kyneton. The SAT students met with the Minister for Sport and Recreation when the funding was announced.

The Sport and Recreation grant and the support given by the Macedon Ranges Youth Worker were two critical factors in moving the project forward. The Youth Worker met regularly with the SAT team and was able to take their views back to Council and incorporate them in the planning of the facility.

The team then began meeting outside of school time to involve others from the community in the design and building of the Skate Park. The team had a planning session each week. This was done by withdrawal of students from classes. The team also discussed the project a great deal informally.

The greatest achievement of the Student Action Team has been in actually getting the skate park to happen - and successfully raising the money for it. The Council has put land aside for the building of the Park. There has been increased awareness by the local Council of the need for a skate park in Kyneton and surrounding areas, where young people could socialise.

At the end of the Skate Competition, students from the team felt a great sense of pride and achievement. Some of the students have become more trustful of some adults at the school. Communication skills have been improved and some students are using the work they do as part of course work eg photographs. The team has shown a great deal of commitment to the project and a high degree of persistence. However, staff at the school recognise that there is still a way to go.

The existing SAT group will continue meeting to ensure that the Skate Park is achieved and that there's an opening competition. Other issues will be explored, such as a waterproof shade area.

Melton Secondary College

Melton Secondary College is located in the western urban fringe of the Melbourne metropolitan area, which is one of the most rapidly growing areas in the State. Melton is situated 40 kilometres from Melbourne and is largely a 'dormitory suburb', with most people travelling into Melbourne for work. The school consists of 1190 students from years 7 to 12. It has a strong history of participation in activities similar to the SAT, and was represented by its principal on the Project Advisory Committee.

The Student Action Team at Melton Secondary College had a strong and continuing focus on youth safety in Melton over the two years. The team worked closely with the local Safer Cities and Shires Project to survey students about perceptions of safe and unsafe areas.



This work continued into the project's second year, with an emphasis on action around one particular area that students had identified as being unsafe. The team carried out a site visit to the main area identified as youth unfriendly, developed a Community Learning Project that focused on recommendations for improvements to the area, and submitted a report and list of recommendations to the Shire.

Four students from years 9 and 10 formed the initial SAT. They were chosen by teachers, with gender balance in mind, and as people who think and ask. It was also decided to have older students, as it was considered that the language in project and training manuals would have been too sophisticated for younger students. However, other students were invited to suggest ways of improving the area once the unsafe area had been identified.

In the second year, a team consisting of six students from year 9 was formed after students were alerted to the program and were invited to participate. They were recommended by their year 8 teachers, and were invited to submit a written application, followed by an interview. The six were chosen largely on the basis of their understanding of what was required to be a team member.

These students attended the first student leadership course held at the Alpine School at Dinner Plains, where the project was more clearly defined and further strengthened. A Community Learning Project (CLP) is focus of the training provided at the Alpine School. This also allowed time for the group to work on their local safety project during an intensive five-week period. The activities there helped the SAT to work as a group and also showed them how to use Edward De Bono's Six Thinking Hats to tackle different ideas from different angles.

After initial meeting with the local Safer Cities and Shires Program Officer and discussing youth safety in Melton, the first SAT prepared a survey using the Safer Cities and Shires Survey as a base. They conducted school-based surveys about public spaces and safety; they re-worded the community survey and applied it to young people in years 7 to 12. As part of the process, they developed a test survey and sampled a form group at each year level. The survey also included a map for visual purposes.

This survey from 1999, and student and local resident complaints, indicated that there were severe problems. So, in the second year, the team worked with the Shire to fix one very dangerous street where there were reports of drugs, alcohol violence and harassment. Information was gathered from a number of surveys completed by senior students at the school and surveys completed by the business owners in the area. Recommendations for improving the street were put to the Shire Council. These included blue lights in the toilets to prevent drug use, speed humps on the road outside a night-club, and public telephones to be available in the street. A site visit prior to attending the Alpine School enabled students to take photos with a digital camera, and for some 'mapping' of the area.

At the end of their time at the Alpine School, the team put their work together as a Powerpoint display presentation for the Principal and staff at the school. When they returned to the school, they repeated the presentation to the staff, and to the Shire Project Officer and consulted with the Shire in planning the next steps. Recommendations have been put to the Shire and acknowledged in the Shire's Corporate Safety Plan.

The SAT were then considering extending the community safety program and developing a safety project focusing on the area around the local railway station.

Teachers report evidence of improved drafting and writing skills through participation in the survey process. In addition, communication skills have been improved in reporting to the school eg via School Assemblies, a full staff meeting and to the Shire's Chief Commissioner. Presentation skills were developed and applied through Powerpoint presentations to and discussions with a range of audiences: students, teachers and administrators. Improved levels of students' self confidence were observed by teachers.

Ovens Secondary College is located in Wangaratta, approximately 230 kilometres north-east of Melbourne. The school has approximately 420 students.

The Student Action Team coordinated a larger group of students on a range of community-based activities which provided them with opportunities to develop skills in leadership, citizenship, communication, organisation and maintaining commitment, and provided opportunities for students to contribute to the local community through links with service agencies and local government.

In the first year, the team organised a 'Spring Into Health' Health Issues Expo for local youth health providers, which involved year 9 and 10 students from two local secondary colleges. This Expo included guest speakers, drama/theatre studies, stall holders (eg YMCA, a nutritionist etc), a survey and prizes. A Council youth worker was also involved initially, as he was starting a Junior Council and the SAT was seen to be related to this.

At the start of the process, the team spent some time coming up with ideas and discussing these. Another local secondary college had had a Youth Health Expo earlier in the year, organised by a local Rural Development Project Officer, and the SAT members thought this would be a good idea to have for their school.

In the second year, the Ovens SAT focused on three separate projects under the heading of 'developing rural pride':

- One team of five students designed and created a mural which formed part of a patchwork of murals from all schools in the district. The murals were coordinated by a local community group and were displayed at the local railway station. The students spent two periods a week on the project throughout Term 3. They also enlisted the support of other helpers including a SAT member from 1999.
- Another team was formed to fund-raise in support of Typo Station, a program that provides residential programs for young men at risk. The team interviewed a Typo staff member, but other constraints meant that the actual project was then put on hold for a new team to take on this project.
- A nearby primary school asked for help with lunchtime activities, and a group of middle school students volunteered to take this on. The team included SAT members and received accolades for their efforts.

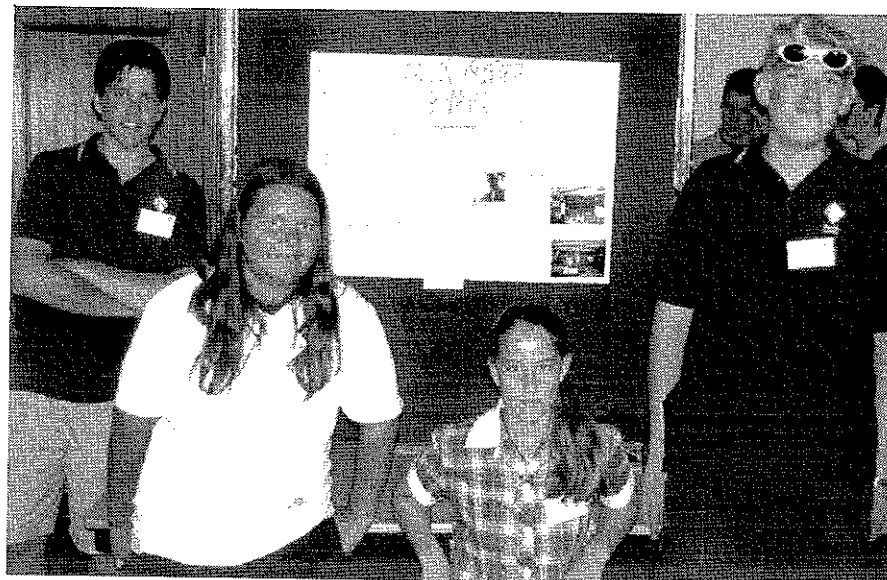
During Term 4, another project commenced, organising a range of activities to be implemented in the school to improve tolerance of difference. A Reconciliation project, which involved some SAT members, prepared the groundwork for this.

The school argued that increasing students' knowledge of and involvement with a range of recreational and health services in community provides a powerful boost to their social safety.

The SAT initially consisted of four students, three females and one male, from years 9 and 10. All were capable students who were involved in a number of activities within the school community. One student lost interest because of other commitments, and another had disputes with other members of the group and left. Attempts were made to recruit other students to the team, but without success.

In the second year, the team was re-formed with 15 students from years 9 and 10. Nine of these worked on the mural. The remainder (with further student support) ran the lunchtime activities at a nearby primary school.

Students who worked at the primary school were very positive about the relationships built up there and provided valuable suggestions for the modification of the program in 2001. Ovens College has been invited to send students again, and the project is likely to extend to another primary school. Students in this group learned to be flexible when programs had to be changed.



The mural was finished and unveiled and this has cheered up the railway station. The students involved in this component were pleased with their effort and felt they had achieved a major goal in completing the mural the way they designed it.

The program demonstrated a way in which SAT activities could be incorporated into the year 9 and 10 curriculum.

There were improvements noted in friendship, cooperation, a sense of ownership and of the importance of the project. Teachers point to increased responsibility and communication with others. Students also indicate that they have developed self-confidence and useful skills in leadership, meeting new people, communication and project organisation.

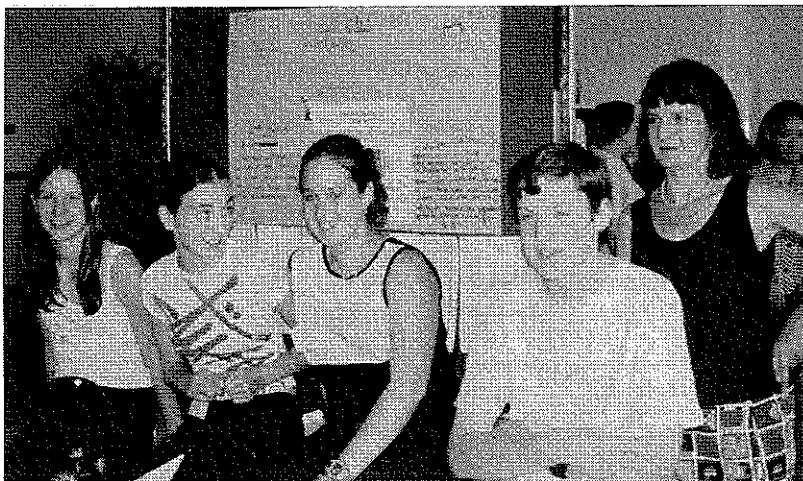
The whole group learned how important the idea of community is; 'mural students' also improved their art skills. Students going to the primary school learnt about organisation and modelling responsible behaviour.

Princes Hill Secondary College

Princes Hill Secondary College is located in North Carlton. It has a population of 825 students, largely from the inner northern city, but also drawing from the wider metropolitan area out to Epping and the western suburbs.

The Student Action Team at Princes Hill Secondary College has worked around issues of 'social safety' or community belongingness. This has included work around inter-generational relationships, where the student team conducted activities at a neighbouring old people's home to improve the perceptions and image of young people in the local community; around inter-school networking, with both secondary and primary schools in the area; around discussions with the police; and around projects run by students within the school.

These issues were chosen to improve the perception of young people in the community: by establishing improved relationships and image, the experience of community safety will increase. That attention to 'social safety' also means the creation of a greater sense of community within the school, and the enhancement of self-esteem through community involvement or engagement in community action.



Initially, the SAT was open for any students to join. A large group of up to 20 students was involved in various ways. Of the original four students in the training program, only one remained at the end of the first year, with the positions of those leaving being taken by other students from the wider group. This wider group remained involved throughout the first year, with up to 40 more being involved from time to time. Of the students who left, one shifted school, while the other two simply lost interest in seeing through the projects.

In the second year, the team consisted of students from years 7, 8 and 9. There was a SAT executive of five students and links with the Junior, Middle School and VCE Student Forums (SRC). While the executive organised the projects and events, many students from Forums (SRCs) became involved in the actual running of the projects. The group remained very stable through the second year, and maintained their strong interest.

The SAT established a relationship between the College and a local residential village for the elderly. In the program's first year, about twenty students met several times with residents for chats, concerts, quiz afternoons, oral interviews and histories. Other projects around the school were initiated by the SAT: a school mural was completed by 'disengaged' students, a disco for Years 7 and 8 students was organised, and a lunchtime radio was established by students.

Under the 'Social Safety' theme in the second year various links and channels of communication were developed with local organisations. Each term, the SAT group focused on a different organisation:

Term 1: the Local Police: Three police officers visited the school and conducted a forum with 30 students from Years 7 to 10. Questions were prepared in advance and sent to the police prior to the meeting.

Term 2: An inter-school forum was organised with two other local Secondary Colleges. The topic was student action in SRCs and cooperative group work.

Term 3: The students themselves conducted an inter-school forum for neighbouring primary schools. The SAT members were trained to be facilitators and to plan the program. The students ran the forum almost completely independently, for 30 primary school students from three local schools.

Term 4: The team again connected up with Princes Hill Village, the residence for elderly people near the school. The program was similar to that in the first year.

The group also organised a disco for Years 7 and 8 students, and organised the teaching of dances to the students to encourage participation (after a low participation in a similar activity in 1999).

There has been an awakening of a sense of community responsibility and enthusiasm within the school. The work of the team seems to have tapped into an area of students' interest that isn't really reflected elsewhere in the school. The work of the team has also boosted involvement in Student Forums (SRCs).

The following outcomes have been identified by teachers and students:

- learning about teamwork;
- fairness in communication;
- improvement of oral skills in public speaking and presentations;
- improvement of verbal and social skills in communication with elderly people;
- skills associated with interviewing and writing of oral histories;
- growth in confidence in social situations;
- improved leadership skills;
- skills of organising and managing - including conferences and meetings.

The team identifies that they have learnt a lot about realistically developing projects, about the operation of meetings and about generating positive energy in the face of negativity. It has 'allowed' students to be positive and involved in activities beyond the classroom and beyond their peer group.

Wanganui Park Secondary College

Wanganui Park Secondary College is located on the outer perimeter of Shepparton in North-East Victoria. It has a population of 980 students, with a small Indigenous student population and refugee group (mainly Iraqi students) in the school.

The school has a 'Student Forum', formed from one student elected from each home group. This Forum meets on a regular basis, and is involved in a range of activities including fundraising, organising student activities and electing student representatives to the School Council.

Over the two years of its operation, the Student Action Team at Wanganui Park Secondary College explored and acted on several issues. These included action around Reconciliation Week, on Trauma Teddies, and on the image of a particular estate near the school.

When the Student Action Team and its mentors returned from the initial training in 1999, the first concerns identified by the mentors were about lunchtimes. They thought the program could look at conducting lunchtime activities. On the other hand, the team itself decided that a major issue in the school was multiculturalism and the lack of recognition or acceptance between many different cultures. The school wrote, at this stage: "One of the aims of SAT is to provide opportunities for all our students to work together on various initiatives to help make the school a more inclusive place for all students". This is an issue not only in their school but also the wider community. Two particular target groups were Aboriginal and Iraqi students. This project was later defined to concentrate on Reconciliation Week.

The Student Action Team also organised activities with Iraqi refugee students who were new to the school, having started at the college in the last 6 months. These refugees had minimal English. The SAT organised lunchtime activities and made contact with their families to help ease the transition into the school community.

In addition, the SAT worked with Neighbourhood Watch and the Shepparton Police to knit Trauma Teddies (for road accident victims) and assisted with a Republican referendum in the school.

The school endeavoured to undertake activities that forged stronger links between the school and its community. The SAT programs were then chosen to require strong links with the community and to give students access to networks outside of the school.

In 2000, the SAT continued to work with the local community House. The issue, which gained considerable support, was a positive program to improve the image of the area and the 'reclaiming' of the international village which was located near the school.

This issue emerged from local publicity. The Parkside Gardens area (near the school) has a poor local image, with the local paper running a front-page story calling it a 'ghetto'. Resident groups were trying to address issues about the image and safety of the area, and the Student Action Team made a decision to get involved.

The Wanganui Student Action Team conducted a Parkside Gardens Community Walk each week over a four-week period, at lunchtimes. The walk was run in conjunction with the North Shepparton Community House and had, as one of its aims, the forging of stronger links between the school and its community.

The walks aimed to:

- heighten community morale and involvement;
- improve public perceptions of the Parkside Gardens community;
- forge stronger links between the school and community;
- encourage regular exercise amongst participants;
- provide leadership and organisational opportunities for students at Wanganui Park Secondary College.

Students, staff, parents and community members walked as part of teams. 109 members of the community registered to walk, with prizes being given to the fastest walkers, to teams and to individuals.

The school has established a very positive relationship with the Community House through the SAT program. There are opportunities for greater cooperation between the two groups in the future.

Initially four Year 10 students were invited to be part of the SAT. Two of these students were elected from the Student Forum and two recruited by the mentors. Teachers chose the particular students because of their long term leadership potential. Year 10 students were targeted in order to enable new students to take on leadership roles in the school, and in order to ensure that the influence of the program and the students would be on-going.

The same four students and two teachers continued throughout the program's first year. Two of the students showed more enthusiasm than the others, however, and made the greatest contribution.

In the second year, the team continued to involve a core of four students, with six extra students helping at times and on specific activities. These were mainly year 10 and 11 students. Some continued from the first year (another of this original team left school for work), and there were some new students, with the Student Forum appointing some representatives again. One of the continuing students had an initial strong involvement in Civics and Citizenship areas, then moved into the Student Forum and subsequently to the SAT. Another student was initially involved in a 'Newsmakers Unit' with Shepparton News, involving newspaper production.

The SAT wavered in its enthusiasm and commitment, and thus some members achieved more than others. Two of the enthusiastic members further developed their organisational and communication skills, and one became a significant team leader and went on to win the Education Trust Leadership Award.

Students developed and applied leadership skills. They developed strong organisation and teamwork skills.

In 2001, the support teacher has taken up a Teacher Release to Industry Program (TRIP) position with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. She is able to continue her involvement with SAT approaches from this position. Students will be doing a Farm Safety project, involving secondary students visiting local rural primary schools and delivering lessons to students on farm safety.

Weeroona College

Weeroona College is a P to 10 college in Bendigo, the third largest city in Victoria. The college has approximately 140 primary school students and 650 secondary school students; many students are rural/farm dwellers, some of whom travel long distances by bus to attend school, while others are suburban dwellers who live in the local neighbourhood.

The Student Action Team at Weeroona College has focused on driver education for young people. In its first year, the team developed a video to advertise a course for skilling young people for driving in adverse country conditions. They participated in a community-based Road Safety campaign called Operation DEFY (Driver Education for Youth) which aimed to help reduce the high road toll of young people. This enabled students to actively participate in planning and decision-making processes within the local community.

The focus issue for Weeroona began with the death of four students in a car accident in Bendigo. This affected most students at the school, and students wanted to follow up on the need for young people to have improved 'country' driving skills. This was entirely the students' initiative.

The Student Action Team project began with attendance by students and teachers at Safer Cities and Shires meetings in Bendigo. These Safer City Forums had alerted students to more local safety issues. All were affected by the deaths of the young people - some were students and ex-students, and newspaper reports about DEFY being started by parents of these young people meant that some students started attending DEFY meetings.

In 1999, there were four Year 9 students on the team, supported by the Student Welfare Coordinator and the SRC support teacher. The four students were selected by these teachers, keeping in mind the need for a gender balance, for obvious student leaders, those capable of completing the project, and students who would 'speak their own mind', but who were not necessarily the 'best students' in the school. The two staff members talked to a lot of other teachers in making these choices. In addition, one further girl from Flora Hill SC and one from the Catholic College were chosen to increase the team size.

In 2000, the 1999 SAT formed a core group to attend Operation DEFY meetings. This core group of Year 10 students continued to be involved with DEFY.

In the first year, the Weeroona Student Action Team worked in various ways around Operation DEFY:

- A youth forum with representatives from each of the secondary colleges in Bendigo has been set up. This group regularly organises full-day 'Learn to Drive' courses at a temporary driver-training course. They also organise fund-raising activities to subsidise these courses to make them affordable for young people.
- Students organised a concert with rock bands made up of students and former students of this College. Students

were asked to make a gold coin donation to 'Operation DEFY' and raffle tickets were sold to win the privilege of shaving the head of one of our Maths teachers. This initiative raised \$901 for 'Operation DEFY'.

- Road safety for young drivers was organised through an advanced driving skills course.
- The Student Action Team developed a promotional video for Driver Education for Youth (DEFY). This involved liaison with police, Bendigo City Council, SES, and Prime TV.

In its second year, the project continued its focus on road safety through Operation DEFY. Representatives from the SAT were involved in the Youth Forum section of DEFY, arranged for College students to provide music for a fundraising Pool Party for Operation DEFY, and continued to be involved with various fundraising schemes to enable the DEFY Track and Education Centre to be constructed. In semester 2, a Year 10 Student Action and Leadership elective was set up. It was modelled on the Red Cross Challenge, which includes a mix of classroom activities focusing on problem-solving, team building and community service activities such as Me on Wheels. Students were responsible for the construction of a mobile bill-board promoting a Road Safety message. Part of the task involved researching the effectiveness of other road safety campaigns, making contact with a number of local agencies, researching the size and type of font, and planning the most effective placement of the mobile billboard. The aim of this project was to have a positive impact on youth road safety, building on the successes of the local 'Operation DEFY' project.

The SAT experienced some frustration with the development of the mobile billboard, particularly in the amount of time that was required to make all the enquiries and contacts and to comply with the regulations from various agencies.

The SAT elective teachers wrote up units of work and an evaluation of the classroom-based SAT activities. Students in the elective received written reports of their involvement at the end of the semester.

The group worked well as a team, according to both teachers and students. The Team consisted of capable students, and their confidence and capability increased through participation in the project. One student became particularly capable in public speaking forums, spokeswoman for the group, and participated in formal and radio interviews.

All students had a confidence boost from their participation. They all spoke at whole school assemblies and at local council forums, and to prominent adults in the community (eg council representatives, chief of police, principals of Bendigo Senior Secondary College and Flora Hill Secondary College). Their skills in this area were greatly improved. Teachers reported that all members of the SAT team would now 'have a go' at anything.

*There have been previous articles in **Connect** about these and other schools involved in the Student Action Teams Project - see **Connect** #119 (October 1999) and #124-125 (August-October 2000).*

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Network News (Surry Hills, NSW) April 2001

Other Ways (AERG, Daylesford, Vic) No 87, March '01

Parlink (Victoria University, Vic) Issue 42, Feb 2001

Rights Now (National Children's and Youth Law Centre, UNSW, NSW) March 2001

ACSARound (YACSA, Adelaide, SA) 1/01, January/February 2001 + **YACSA Annual Report**, 1999-2000

ikes (YACVic, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 1 Eds 3, 4, 5; February, March, April 2001

Youth Studies Australia (ACYS, Hobart, Tas) Vol 20 No 1, March 2001

International:

Education Now (Nottingham, UK) No 31, Spring 2001

The Education Revolution (AERO, New York, USA) No 31, Winter 2001

Yoyouth (Korean National Commission for UNESCO, Seoul, Korea) December 2000

National Coalition News (National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA) Vol 25 No 3; Winter 2001

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